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ABSTRACT

The comprehensive city planning process for the 70s must be broad in (1) activity -- research, planning, and programing; (2) scale -- neighborhood, city, and region; and (3) scope -- human, physical, and economic. Planning should be a continuous process that recycles annually and involves both the government operating agencies and the entire community. An annual statement should be prepared to include a state-of-the-city report; a section for goals, objectives, and future plans; and a 6-year financial projection with dollar amounts scheduled for particular programs and projects. The document describes the steps initiated in Philadelphia to make such a comprehensive planning process a reality. (Author/MLF)

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UP FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
A STRATEGY FOR ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

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UP FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A STRATEGY FOR ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

Oh Comprehensive Plan, oh master scheme,
We created thee from a planner's dream.
We bound thee in a shiny book
Used flashy colors - the modern look.
We presented our work to A.I.P.
And other planners worshiped thee.
We told the mayor the plan is done
Our work's complete, the battle's won.
Yet -- here we are where we began
The city goes on, despite the plan.

Should we scrap it? Should we throw out comprehensive planning? Should we professional planners admit that a major element of our stock-in-trade is a miserable failure?

Perhaps. Or perhaps, alternatively, we should reconsider our traditional comprehensive planning processes in light of the urgent needs of our cities today. At the present time the demands for immediate action seem so overwhelming that we are all tempted to act - - or I should say react - - without taking the time to rationally plan our actions in a comprehensive fashion. I submit that we must do this planning, that comprehensive planning must take place, if we are to effectively deal with the great problems of the day. Certainly the kind of comprehensive planning that we did in the 50's and 60's will not do for the 70's. We must rethink the process and reform the methods. I would like to begin that rethinking today, by presenting one new approach to comprehensive city planning.

I shall use a simple diagram of three-dimensional coordinates to help structure this discussion (Figure I). Let us call the horizontal axis "activity," the vertical axis "scope," and the perpendicular axis "scale."

The activity of planning can be broken down in many ways. For the purposes of this discussion, let us divide it into three phases: "research," "plan making," and "programming." While the process as it appears here is linear, this of course is not the case. In the jargon of our systems analysts, there is a feed-back loop in which the previous planning and programming is evaluated in the research phase as the input for the next cycle of planning and programming.

If we also decide to divide the "scope" axis into three parts, we would probably have fairly strong agreement that a rational breakdown might be "human development," "physical development," and "economic development." And for "scale," let us use "neighborhood," "city," and "region." There we have the whole matrix.

I assert that most planners and most public planning bodies throughout this country have concentrated their activities very close to the intersection of these axes. They have been doing "physical city plan making." (Figure II). Our plans have been based on very little research - very little knowledge of the structure of this complex system we call the city. In most cases we have done very little programming that is related to the plan. The budgets and capital programs of our cities generally are not implementing devices of the plan.

On the "scope" side, while we have over the last ten years paid lip service to the concept of human resources planning or "social planning," we have really done very little about it. Many major planning agencies have established some form of a social planning unit on their staff, but I would wager that the output of these units has had even less effect on the problems of our cities than our physical plans. The same goes for "economic planning," which is not currently as much in vogue on the city scale as social planning, and thus even less effective.

We have seen some considerable movement by many metropolitan areas along the scale axis; but the path is not yet well charted. Some of us who jumped into neighborhood planning with great enthusiasm and high moral intentions have gotten stung, and stung badly. We were disappointed when the local residents did not understand and accept our style of problem solving, and we were frustrated to learn that the major problems facing the city dweller just cannot be solved at the neighborhood scale. As for regional planning, we have recently seen the rise of metropolitan and regional planning agencies throughout the country, thanks to the Federal carrot. But, except in a few rare instances, such planning has little power or influence over the growth and development of its metropolitan area. Moreover, there has been little coordination between planning on the neighborhood, city and regional scales. Let us not, however, disparage these first steps, these first attempts to extend the scale.

We must, in my opinion, break open this inward-looking sphere of physical city plan making and direct our energies along each of these axes if we are to be effective at all in the job that we are about. Everything on this diagram is part of comprehensive planning, and such must be the case if it is indeed to be comprehensive.

But we cannot possibly spread ourselves so thin, you reply. And I agree. We cannot, and we need not. But I shall come back to that point in a moment.

Let us now turn to some of the other aspects of comprehensive planning that have made it so ineffective in meeting the current problems of our cities. The product of a typical comprehensive planning process is an end-state plan -- a snapshot of what the city should be like at some distant point in the future, usually about twenty years hence. Some plans suggest ways to reach this utopian future, and some have shorter time horizons. But they are generally all rather long-range end-state plans.

This manner of comprehensive planning is rather absurd. Certainly there is value in setting forth a picture of a better future to, as Daniel Burnham put it, "inspire men's minds." But we have all learned by now that planning is a process; and comprehensive planning must be a continuous process. The comprehensive plan is never done; it is always in process. The process must be continuous, and it must recycle frequently at regular intervals, perhaps as frequently as every year. In these rapidly changing times this is the only way that the process can be kept current to the needs of our city, placing immediate specific needs in the context of the more general less immediate goals and objectives of the city.

Let us look at another problem of the typical comprehensive planning process. It is a process that is normally engaged in exclusively by professional planners. We "consult" with other agencies of government, we "consult" with the citizens, we "consult" with business, but we do not attempt to make any of these agents a part of the planning process. They must be a part of the planning process. Just as we have seen rather convincingly that a community group will not accept a planner's plan that the community has not helped develop, so we cannot expect the other arms of government -- the ones that have the power to act and make things happen -- to adopt and implement a plan that they did not help prepare. Besides, what gives us city planners such perfect insight into the problems of a community or city government that we can independently prescribe the best solutions?

This brings me back to a point that I raised earlier, about spreading ourselves too thin. Obviously we cannot do all of the physical, social and economic planning at the neighborhood, city and metropolitan scales if we depend solely on the resources of a typically constituted city planning agency. Our staff isn't large enough, well educated enough, specialized enough to do this kind of job. But there are agents within the government and within the community who, together with the planners, can make it work. The arrows on the diagram (Figure II) then do not so much represent empire building on the part of the city planning agency, as they do evangelism on the part of the planner. We must go out and spread the gospel of planning, and welcome all -- be it the Streets Commissioner or the leader of the Black Panthers -- into the planning process. As community groups begin to do their own local planning (small-scale neighborhood planning), and operating departments begin to prepare their own program plans (functional planning), the role of the comprehensive planner becomes more that of system creator, coordinator, and integrator of the planning activity of others.

Finally, this new comprehensive planning process must have a direct relationship to the elected officials of our city -- the decision-makers who set city policy in their allocation of the city's resources through the budgeting process. The whole reason for planning is to assist these elected officials in making these important allocative decisions. If the plan is not recognized by these decision-makers, and if it is not in a form in which it can readily be used in making these critical decisions, then it is in fact useless.

I have submitted that comprehensive planning must be a continuous process, a process that produces decisions, or action. Action is the ultimate product. Along the way, however, planning documents must be produced as well. The process must be made visible and tangible in the form of a document, or else it cannot be communicated and understood. The goals, objectives and recommended courses of action cannot be reviewed, attacked, revised, refined, and adopted unless they are put into the form of a public document. Because I feel strongly that the comprehensive planning process must be closely related to the annual budgeting process of the city, and because I recognize that planning must always be current and relevant to immediately perceived needs, I urge that we produce this document -- the comprehensive plan -- every year.

And what might be the form of this annual comprehensive plan? Let us turn back to our horizontal activity axis for guidance (Figure III). The research and evaluation activity should result in an annual "state of the city" report. This report would be a pulse-taking function. It would present a vast array of data on the social, physical and economic state of the city -- data which could be compared to that of the previous year or an earlier point in time, or to similar data for other cities or the nation as a whole. The current discussions about a national social report thus address only one aspect, the social aspect, of this larger state of the city report.

The plan making activity should result in an annual restatement of the goals, the objectives and the plans of the city. To a large extent these goals and objectives should grow out of the state of the city report, although obviously the two are interdependent. This section of the comprehensive plan might well be arranged as are most plans currently, stating first the most general goals and objectives of the city and then detailing and refining them through separate functional plans, such as a plan for health services, a plan for education, and a plan for transportation. These plans, of course, should not be limited to physical aspects. The plan for health would set forth the policies of the city for meeting the health needs of its people, the programs which will be carried on, and the physical facilities required to support these programs. As stated earlier, the local health department would prepare this plan together with the comprehensive planner, so that the plan has meaning and usefulness to the body that must carry it out.

Finally, the programming activity would allocate the limited resources available to the city over the next few years to the various programs and projects proposed in the preceding plans. Ideally the program section would

combine the operating and capital budgets. The distinction between the two budgets is relevant only to the financial planner in designating financing mechanisms. The program planner, like the average citizen, should make little distinction between the operating and capital budgets. Ideally, too, these budgets would be part of a larger program -- say a six-year operating and capital program, similar to the present capital program of most cities.

We might call this document an Annual Comprehensive Development Program. It is interesting to note that such a document could be produced at any scale -- an Annual Comprehensive Development Program for a neighborhood, or a region, or a nation. Similarly, we could reduce the comprehensive scope to an annual physical development program, or an annual human development program, or an annual economic development program.

Let us step back for just a minute and review what I have said to this point about the comprehensive planning process. I have said that:

1. It must be broad in activity (research, plan making, programming), scale (neighborhood, city, region), and scope (human, physical, economic).

We can no longer be satisfied with traditional physical city plan making.

2. It must be a continuous process.

We must abandon the long-range end-state plan in favor of a continuous process which recycles annually.

3. It must involve the operating agencies of government and the community at large.

We must spread the gospel of planning; only if all these bodies are involved in the process will it be effective in meeting our cities' needs.

4. It must relate to the political decision-making process.

The planning process should guide and advise the budgeting operation, and the plan might even be officially adopted each year as part of the city's operating and capital budgets.

5. An annual document should be produced.

This document should contain a state of the city report, a section of goals, objectives and plans, and the six-year financial program where dollar amounts are scheduled for particular programs and projects.

Having now set forth the broad outlines for a modern comprehensive planning process, all that remains is a prescription for creating such a planning process in a large American city. Obviously, the best method for introducing a new process varies from one city to another. I have neither the time nor the wisdom to discuss the full range of approaches. Rather, I shall limit my discussion to the beginning steps that are being taken in Philadelphia toward making such a comprehensive planning process a reality.

The City Planning Commission in Philadelphia is concurrently moving along two parallel courses of action. First, it is expanding its capital programming process into a physical development programming process; the capital program will become an Annual Physical Development Program. Second, it is introducing a new planning - programming - budgeting system into city government which is similar in many ways to the proposed comprehensive planning process; this system can facilitate the production of an Annual Comprehensive Development Program.

I shall comment briefly on each of these courses of action. Comprehensive planning and capital programming are two separate activities in Philadelphia, and they are both responsibilities of the City Planning Commission under the Home Rule Charter. The theoretical relationship between planning and programming is quite direct - - capital programming is an implementing mechanism for comprehensive planning. In practice, however, this relationship has been difficult to establish and maintain. The hope is to incorporate the major elements of comprehensive planning into the capital programming process over time. The Annual Capital Program will thus become an Annual Physical Development Program, or a part - - the physical part - - of the proposed larger Annual Comprehensive Development Program. This means that the goals and objectives, the physical standards, the functional plans and the land use plan elements of the Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed each year, and published in summary form as part of the Capital Program. This also means that a data system must be established for producing an annual state of the city report in physical terms. This is a massive undertaking, but a beginning has been made.

Philadelphia is turning to the planning - programming - budgeting system (PPBS) to establish the larger comprehensive planning process. This course of action is being followed not only because PPBS as a process is very similar to the comprehensive planning process outlined, but also because it has already been instituted in Philadelphia, through the joint efforts of the City Planning Commission, the Finance Department, and the Managing Director's Office, and the operating departments already largely understand and accept it. Planning - programming - budgeting is, in simple terms, researching and defining the problems of the city, setting forth within a framework of broad functional areas the goals and objectives of the city for solving these problems, and then designing programs to attain these goals and objectives and monitoring their success. Is this not the comprehensive planning process described above? In addition, PPBS by its nature must involve all of the operating departments of the city, and its object is to affect the operating and

capital budgets, the mechanisms through which the elected decision-makers allocate the scarce financial resources of the city. PPBS, as an ongoing process, should produce a major document each year to guide these budgeting decisions, and this document could take the form of the proposed Annual Comprehensive Development Program.

Based on our experience to date, I believe not only that a new form of comprehensive planning is desirable and necessary in our cities, but also that a process similar to the one proposed herein is realistic and practical. I believe that we professional planners should lead our cities to this new level of planning activity. Certainly, as I have suggested, presently established planning commissions cannot and should not try to undertake the full range of planning activity that I have described. Operating arms of government - - and, on the neighborhood scale, community organizations - - must become fully involved in the planning process.

The challenge of solving the problems of modern urban America is great and exciting. Our traditional methods of comprehensive planning are not sufficient to meeting this challenge. City planners must provide the leadership necessary to establish a new process of comprehensive planning if our cities are to survive and prosper in the decade ahead.

FIGURE I

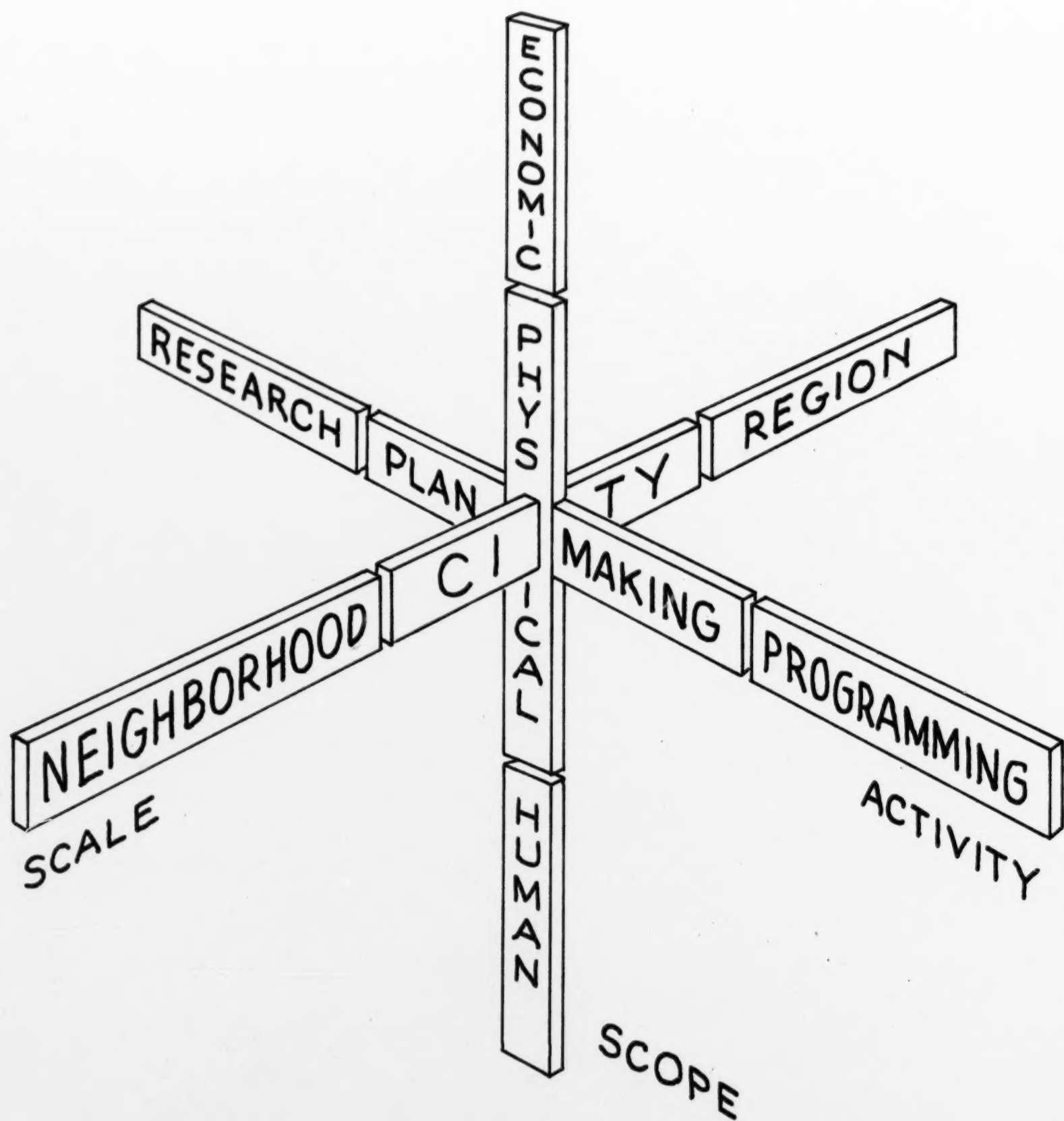


FIGURE II

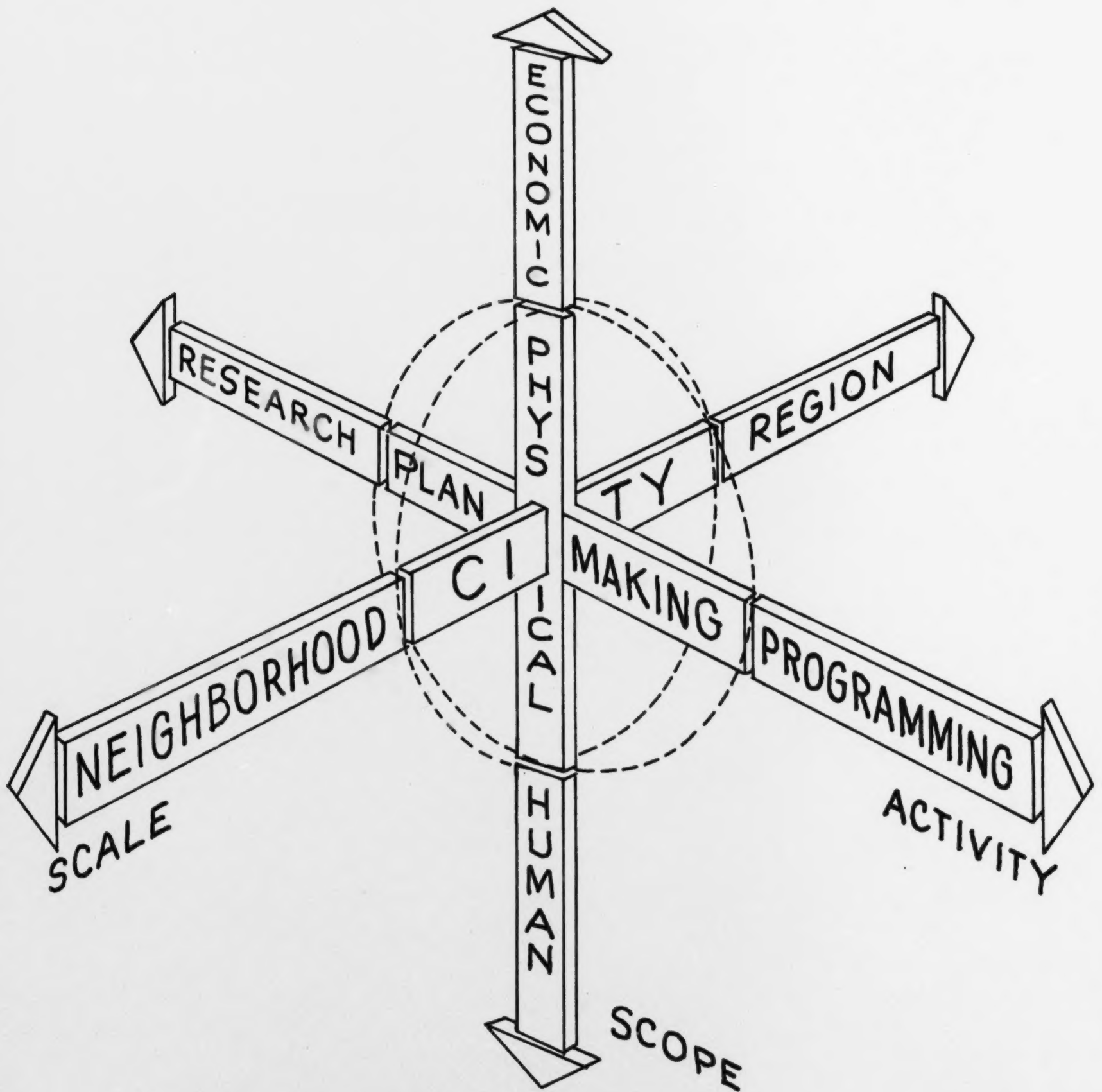


FIGURE III

